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Michigan Shutdown Ends

POSTED: 4:47 am EDT October 1, 2007

UPDATED: 8:04 am EDT October 1, 2007

The Michigan Senate voted early Monday to expand the state's sales tax to apply to services in two months, completing the final piece of a budget deal to end a partial government shutdown that lasted a little more than four hours.

Applause broke out in Gov. Jennifer Granholm's office at the Capitol as soon as the final vote was announced. The deal prompted Granholm to call off the partial shutdown of state government that had officially started at 12:01 a.m.

"This budget agreement is the right solution for Michigan," Granholm said in a statement. "We prevented massive cuts to public education, health care and public safety while also making extensive government reforms and passing new revenue. With the state back on solid financial footing, we can turn our focus to the critical task of jump-starting our economy and creating new jobs."

Granholm was expected to sign a 30-day extension of Michigan's budget that technically expired at midnight. The continuation budget will keep government running.

The Legislature also agreed to raise Michigan's income tax rate from 3.9 percent to 4.35 percent. Structural changes to state government -- including the management of teacher and other public employee benefits -- also are part of the package.

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STATE OF CRISIS

Senate approves tax on services, averting a state shutdown today

Deal is 'right solution for Michigan,' Granholm says

October 1, 2007

BY CHRIS CHRISTOFF, DAWSON BELL AND ZACHARY GORCHOW

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS

UPDATED AT 5:20 A.M.: LANSING – The shutdown of state government was halted early this morning when the Senate voted to expand the 6% sales tax to various services, the final major piece of a plan to erase a \$1.75-billion deficit and balance a 2007-08 budget.

Democrat Lt. Gov. John Cherry cast the deciding vote for a 20-19 tally, the minimum needed for passage of an historic budget agreement that stopped what would have been a chaotic and embarrassing interruption of state services.

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Three of 21 Republicans voted for the sales tax change, and only one of 17 Democrats opposed it.

“This budget agreement is the right solution for Michigan,” Gov. Jennifer Granholm said in a news release after the vote. “We prevented massive cuts to public education, health care and public safety while also making extensive government reforms and passing new revenue. With the state back on solid financial footing, we can turn our focus to the critical task of jumpstarting our economy and creating new jobs.”

The vote came about 4 a.m., about three hours after the House and Senate voted to raise the 3.9% income tax rate to 4.35%, and approved controversial changes in school employee health insurance and pensions benefits aimed at reducing state costs.

The Senate vote to raise the income tax was also 20-19, with Cherry as the tie-breaker.

The two votes triggered a 30-day interim state budget which Gov. Jennifer Granholm said she would sign – if coupled with a tax increase – to avert a shutdown.

Granholm said 35,000 state workers threatened with temporary layoffs would be told to report to work this morning at their regular work times.

The votes concluded an epic, 17-day struggle over taxes and the size and importance of state government, as the Legislature met in numerous late-night sessions with no results.

Democratic leaders hailed the approved plan as a responsible compromise, while Republicans decried it as a massive tax on Michigan’s struggling taxpayers.

Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop, R-Rochester, had held out for a smaller tax hike and bigger spending cuts. He said he was disappointed at the final outcome, but said some spending reforms were enacted that would reduce the cost to taxpayers over the long haul.

In the end, Bishop said, Granholm and Democrats who control the House were able to flex their political will for the tax increases.

He said work would begin now to cut \$435 million from state spending and produce a permanent 2007-08 budget.

“Our members are going to work hard to make this the best state to work, live and raise a family,” Bishop said.

The tax increases will generate \$1.35 billion in additional revenue for the state, with the promise of \$435 million in spending cuts.

Those cuts will be decided in the next month, as the Legislature determines spending for public schools and the state’s 19 departments.

The flurry of final votes late Sunday night and early this morning capped yet another marathon session in a tumultuous two-and-a-half weeks.

Late Sunday, the Democrat-controlled House passed a bill to raise the state income tax from 3.9% to 4.35% by a 57-52 vote with just two Republicans — Chris Ward of Brighton and Ed Gaffney of Grosse Pointe Farms — voting for it. Only three Democrats — Lisa Wojno of Warren, Martin Griffin of Jackson and Mike Simpson of Liberty Township near Jackson — voted against it.

Gaffney said he is "not happy with what I did," but it needed to be done to "break the logjam and put us on a course to keep government open."

House Minority Leader Craig DeRoche, R-Novi, criticized the votes to raise the income tax and extend the sales tax on services.

"This was vote for bureaucracy and special interests," DeRoche said. "This is one of the largest spending sprees in Michigan history, it is a 10% increase in the size of the bureaucracy."

He added, "We stood on principle to cut and reform and have the state live within its means, like working families have to live within their means."

Granholtz and her fellow Democrats argued more revenue is needed to head off deep cuts to schools and state services for health and public safety.

House Speaker Andy Dillon said the House had done its part to solve the \$1.75-billion deficit, putting the issue in the Republican-controlled Senate's hands.

Asked why the House couldn't have approved a \$1.35-billion tax increase — the size of the income and sales tax increases the House approved Sunday night — weeks ago, Dillon replied: "It's a nature of the legislative body to wait till the last second to make tough decision."

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FACING BUDGET-INDUCED LAYOFFS

State workers in limbo

Many wait to see if they have a job

October 1, 2007

BY AMBER HUNT

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Kindra Wicklund, an 11-year employee with the Michigan Department of Transportation, spent Sunday wondering whether she'd still have a job this morning.

Sure, the layoff would be temporary, but the pay loss would hurt either way -- and she'd have no idea how long it would last.

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"We're told to wake up Monday morning, turn on the TV and learn with the rest of the state whether we should come to work," Wicklund, a land survey technician, said Sunday night.

The state shutdown that has loomed for weeks finally came to a head this weekend, leaving employees -- and the public -- scratching their heads.

While Michiganders puzzled over which state services would continue and which would be suspended, employees like Wicklund faced their own all-consuming question: Will I have a job come Monday?

"Our department is one of the largest, and we've done our best to communicate with the staff as frequently as possible," said T.J. Bucholz, a spokesman for the Michigan Department of Community Health.

"In general, we all remain concerned about not having a budget. It has an impact on an awful lot of people, an awful lot of my friends."

The state has been divvied into two groups: essential and nonessential workers. Wicklund was informed she's nonessential, she said Sunday.

"That's a little harsh," she said. "It's kind of one more blow."

She said state workers have been told that once they're laid off, they're no longer considered state employees.

If they choose to work on their own time, they won't get reimbursed, she said.

They have been told they'd keep their health insurance, however.

Wicklund isn't alone in her confusion. Residents are perplexed, too, said Maureen Sorbet, spokeswoman for the state's Department of Human Services.

She said some people are panicking because they don't know which of her offices' services would be suspended.

She offered a rundown of what's continuing, which includes placements for foster care and adult protective services; emergency investigations; public assistance checks for current clients; child support; emergency cash payments for evictions, utility shutoffs and lack of food.

"With the short time frame, there wasn't any way we could notify our clients in advance if a shutdown occurs," Sorbet said. "Now we're monitoring the news reports ourselves."

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Metro Detroiters say it shouldn't have come to this

October 1, 2007

BY DAVID ASHENFELTER

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Gov. Jennifer Granholm and state lawmakers deserve a thumbs-down for their handling -- or mishandling -- of the state budget crisis, several metro Detroit shoppers and consumers said Sunday.

Nearly all of them agreed that the leaders waited too long to deal with Michigan's deepening financial woes and that they should have moved sooner to head off the threat of a shutdown of state government.

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"It's just deplorable that the Legislature and the governor have put this off for so long," Frank Samida, 55, of Royal Oak said after emerging from an Office Depot on Woodward.

But Samida, a AAA Michigan data processing employee, said he doesn't relish the prospect of paying higher income taxes or a sales tax on services that previously were untaxed.

And what bothers him most is that his wife, a child protective services worker for the Michigan Department of Human Services, was told not to report to work today in anticipation of a shutdown.

Kevin DuPre, 49, of Troy said the Legislature and governor need a reality check.

"I don't think they're in touch with the people," DuPre, a computer software architect, said while helping his son, a college student, store possessions at a Public Storage facility on Chicago Road.

During Sunday's negotiations, state leaders considered imposing the 6% sales tax on warehousing and storage services, which would add \$4.80 to DuPre's monthly \$80 storage tab.

Raising taxes is insensitive to people who have taken wage cuts or lost their jobs in Michigan's sagging economy, DuPre added.

"We've lost way too many jobs, and taxing the people who are left isn't doing much to help us," he said. "More taxes isn't the solution. Cutting unnecessary government spending is the solution."

Not everyone agrees that state leaders have dropped the ball or that tax increases are such a bad thing.

"Nobody likes to pay taxes. However, I think we have to face reality," said Mary Lou Gleason, 59, of Beverly Hills. "I don't know of any solution unless we cut more services, and I think we've already cut to the bone."

Gleason, a teacher in the Berkley School District, flashed her newly manicured nails, a service that would be subject to the 6% sales tax under the proposal the Legislature considered.

She said she doesn't mind paying the tax on her \$70 French manicures because the money is needed to balance the budget and having her nails done is a luxury -- not a necessity.

But Olivia Wright, a 50-something defense contractor from Sterling Heights, said federal officials need to come up with a flat income tax that would pay for all state and federal services. She said a flat federal tax would eliminate the need for all of the state income and sales taxes.

"Ten percent, 5%, nothing exorbitant, a flat rate to pay for everything," Wright said as she headed into Macy's at Oakland Mall with her two adult daughters.

Abby Lippitt, 38, of Troy had only one description of the prospect of a tax increase.

<http://www.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action=cpt&title=Metro+Detroiters+say+it+shouldn%27t+ha...> 10/1/2007

Metro Detroiters say it shouldn't have come to this

"Horrible, just horrible," she said as she left a Meijer store on Coolidge near 14 Mile in Royal Oak.

But Lippitt, an intuitive counselor -- a psychic -- declined to predict the outcome of the budget crisis as she headed for her car.

She said she hadn't had enough time to meditate on the problem.

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Monday, October 01, 2007

State government back open for business

Granholm orders state workers to report to work this morning

Mark Hornbeck and Charlie Cain / Detroit News Lansing Bureau



Dale G. Young / The Detroit News

- Gov. Jennifer Granholm looks for swing votes on the income tax bill on the House floor Sunday night. The House voted 57-52 -- backed by 55 Democrats and two Republicans -- for the income tax increase, which would ratchet up the levy from 3.9 percent to 4.35 percent.



Dale G. Young / The Detroit News

Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop, R-Rochester, appeared on the House floor a couple of times during the vote on the teacher health insurance bill to sway some GOP votes. Republicans had demanded the insurance reform bill in exchange for casting votes in support of tax hikes.



Elizabeth Conley / The Detroit News

Republican state Sen. Roger Kahn of Saginaw, hugs Democratic Sen. Mickey Switalski after the Senate finally agreed to a budget after 4 a.m. Monday, Oct. 1.

LANSING - State government is open for business after lawmakers gave Gov. Jennifer Granholm what she wanted this morning to call off a shutdown.

After the Senate early this morning passed a sales tax expansion, Granholm ordered state employees to work, ending a brief halt in services that began at 12:01 a.m. today.

"This budget agreement is the right solution for Michigan," Granholm said in a statement. "We prevented massive cuts to public education, health care and public safety while also making extensive government reforms and passing new revenue. With the state back on solid financial footing, we can turn our focus to the critical task of jump-starting our economy and creating new jobs."

Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop called some of the measures a win for Republicans.

"We've been fighting so long for cuts and reforms. The governor has been fighting so long for tax increases, and she does control Michigan government," Bishop said after the Senate adjourned shortly before 4:30 a.m. today. "But we made progress on cuts and reforms."

Lawmakers took the state past the midnight deadline for a shutdown, but moved to avert the full impact of the crisis by approving a flurry of bills this morning including a boost in the state's income tax from 3.9 to 4.35 percent and sales tax expansion.

The deadline slipped by with the House approving Republican-sought reforms of public employee health care that were seen as a key to a deal. The Republican-led Senate gave final approval to that legislation at 1:04 a.m. today.

The Senate passed the sales tax bill on a 20-19 vote, with Lt. Gov. John Cherry casting the tie-breaking vote. The bill headed to Granholm. All told, the

tax hikes would raise \$1.35 billion. No significant action was taken on cutting government spending, with \$400 million in cuts to be made in coming weeks.

Granholtz demanded that the Legislature pass the tax increases before she would call off the planned layoff of 35,000 state employees. Granholtz said at 12:23 a.m. that the Legislature had not completed its jobs and she was implementing shutdown plans.

Aides to the governor said she was determined to see that a budget-balancing plan was on her desk before she left the Capitol today.

The measures would alleviate a \$1.75 billion budget deficit for the fiscal year that starts today.

House Republican Leader Craig DeRoche of Novi called the tax hikes "a victory of the bureaucracy and special interests and a loss for families struggling to make ends meet. This is one of the largest spending sprees in Michigan history."

Racing to try to meet Granholtz's deadline, the state House had pushed through a 30-day continuation budget to maintain current spending and passed a sales tax on a host of services and an income tax hike to provide new revenue. The same wasn't true of spending cuts, a key part of a budget compromise, which failed to gain support or even reach votes. The continuation budget was then approved by the Senate and sent to Granholtz for her hoped-for signature. It would allow the state to spend money into this month while budget talks continue.

The linchpin in the overall agreement for Republicans - reform of teacher health insurance - was passed by the House just before midnight.

Earlier, the income tax passed the House with support of 55 Democrats and two Republicans, following lobbying on the floor by Granholtz. The bill would ratchet up the levy from 3.9 percent to 4.35 percent to raise \$760 million. The rate would begin a gradual rollback in 2011 and return to 3.9 percent by 2015.

The state Senate was to take up the emergency budget and service tax expansion and income tax increase bills later this morning.

"The votes have to be there. The House has stepped up to the plate. It's our turn," said Senate Democratic Leader Mark Schauer of Battle Creek.

House Speaker Andy Dillon, D-Redford Township, said he was seeking a legal opinion on whether lawmakers had to act on the teacher insurance bill Sunday night, or whether they have a couple weeks to finish it up - even as the House was voting on the bill beginning at 11:15 p.m.

"Now all eyes should turn to the Senate," Dillon said. He chastised House Republicans for failing to put up votes to save the state from shutdown.

"Republicans refused to put up votes to pass anything," he said.

A 6 percent sales tax on tanning, carpet cleaning, ski lifts, landscaping and some 20 other services won narrow passage in the state House as Granholtz

and lawmakers made an 11th-hour push to avoid sending the state to the brink of a spending shutdown.

The House passed the controversial levy with 56 Democratic votes, the minimum needed for passage. The measure was to go to the Senate early this morning, in the first moments of the first closure of Michigan government in the state's 140-year history.

The House failed in its first attempt to win approval of legislation that would raise \$725 million annually by extending the 6 percent sales tax to services.

Republicans had demanded the teacher insurance reform bill in exchange for casting votes in support of tax hikes. But by Monday morning, Republicans had failed to put up any votes for a tax increase. Granholm had said she wouldn't sign the emergency budget without new revenue in place, and she maintained that stance into the morning. She has said the state needs revenue increases immediately to avoid plunging deeper into deficit.

"There is a path to a resolution and the Legislature needs to walk that path," said Granholm spokeswoman Liz Boyd, who added the governor had been meeting with legislative leaders throughout the day and into the evening.

After the votes failed earlier in the day, a clearly frustrated House speaker lashed out at House Republicans.

"We need some adults in the Republican caucus," said Speaker Andy Dillon, D-Redford Township. "It's their No. 1 reform, it's their Holy Grail and they can't even vote for it," he said of teacher health care bill.

"They're playing games with the State of Michigan and that's sad."

Lawmakers have spent the past three weekends huddled in the Capitol in attempt to resolve the budget crisis Sunday.

Eighteen legislators paused at 9:30 a.m. Sunday for a makeshift church service in the House Appropriations Room, led by Rep. Robert Dean, D-Grand Rapids, a pastor of the New Life Church of God in Christ and Rep. Tom Pearce, R-Rockford, founder of a faith-based drug and alcohol treatment center.

"We're here to pray for God's intervention, we're not here to pray politics," Pearce said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report. You can reach Mark Hornbeck at (313) 222-2470 or mhornbeck@detnews.com.



Taxes rise, Michigan government shutdown ends

10/1/2007, 6:23 a.m. ET

By **TIM MARTIN** and **DAVID EGGERT**
The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — The state Legislature agreed early Monday to raise the income tax and expand the sales tax to services in a historic deal with the governor that quickly ended a partial state government shutdown.

For just over four hours early Monday, fewer state police were on Michigan highways, campgrounds were closed, road construction projects and lottery sales were stopped, and more service interruptions were on the horizon for later in the day until the final pieces were sent to Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm.

Applause broke out in Granholm's office at the Capitol as soon as the final vote was announced at 4:18 a.m. The deal prompted Granholm to call off the partial shutdown of government that began at 12:01 a.m.

"This budget agreement is the right solution for Michigan," Granholm said in a statement. "We prevented massive cuts to public education, health care and public safety while also making extensive government reforms and passing new revenue. With the state back on solid financial footing, we can turn our focus to the critical task of jump-starting our economy and creating new jobs."

Granholm signed a 30-day extension of Michigan's budget that technically expired at midnight. The continuation budget keeps government running.

The Legislature agreed to raise Michigan's income tax rate from 3.9 percent to 4.35 percent and expand the 6 percent sales tax to some services. Granholm signed both measures. Structural changes to state government — including the management of teacher and other public employee benefits — also are part of the package.

The tax increases should erase most of a projected \$1.75 billion deficit in Michigan's next budget. The final budget for the new fiscal year will include \$440 million in spending cuts, including no inflationary funding increase for public universities and community colleges, Granholm said.

The Republican-led Senate finished passing the package at the end of a draining, marathon session that covered parts of three days. Members of the Democratic-controlled House stopped voting and left the chamber before 4 a.m. since the only key vote related to the deal remained in the Senate.

"Nobody wanted a shutdown. I think that is true across the board," said Liz Boyd, a spokeswoman for Granholm.

Michigan already has the nation's highest unemployment rate — 7.4 percent in August — and just went through a two-day strike involving the United Auto Workers and General Motors Corp. Disrupting services from state parks to road construction risked further upsetting an already unsettled public.

But Boyd said the months-long debate over Michigan's new budget is about defining the state's future and making sure enough money was available to support education, public safety and health care.

Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop, R-Rochester, said he was disappointed that taxes are going up but added that Republicans successfully pushed for spending cuts and government restructuring changes.

"It's been a long, long couple of days," he said. "We're coming out of this having been through a lot and I think we're better for it."

Without a budget deal in place, 35,000 of the state's roughly 53,000 workers would have been barred from going to work Monday morning and all state services except those needed to protect health and safety would've halted.

Employee paychecks would have been reduced to reflect any hours missed because of a shutdown, but

Granholm asked them all to report to work as usual Monday. The state last withheld some employee paychecks in 1959, when a cash-starved state budget resulted in what became known as the Payless Payday crisis.

"It's always tough in a recession to look at doing a revenue increase," said House Speaker Andy Dillon, D-Redford. "But I think it was clearly unavoidable. We also need reforms, and we are getting substantial reforms as part of this agreement."

Some of the toughest votes were for tax increases, especially in the Republican-led Senate.

The Senate split 19-19 twice, forcing Lt. Gov. John Cherry to cast the tie-breaking vote in favor of the income tax bill and expanded sales tax to cover some services.

Four Republican senators voted for the higher income tax — Patricia Birkholz of Saugatuck, Tom George of Portage, Ron Jelinek of Three Oaks and Gerald Van Woerkom of Norton Shores. Democrats Glenn Anderson of Westland and Dennis Olshove of Warren voted against the income tax increase.

Three Republican senators — Jelinek, Valde Garcia of Howell and Wayne Kuipers of Holland — voted to expand the sales tax to services. Anderson was the lone Democrat opposing the sales tax expansion.

The House passed the income tax measure 57-52. Democrats hold a 58-52 edge in the House, but three Democrats — Martin Griffin and Michael Simpson of the Jackson area and Lisa Wojno of Warren — voted against it. Two Republicans, Chris Ward of Brighton and Ed Gaffney of Grosse Pointe Farms, voted in favor of the proposal.

No House Republicans voted for the bill placing the 6 percent sales tax on services — a proposal stiffly opposed by the business community. All Democrats did, except for Reps. Marc Corriveau of Northville and Kate Ebli of Monroe, who voted no.

The sales tax would not apply to tickets to sporting and entertainment events or accounting services. But businesses and consumers would pay the tax on ski tickets, administrative and investment services, consultants, warehousing and storage, interior design, commercial landscaping and janitorial services, among other services.

Raising the state's income tax to 4.35 percent will raise an additional \$765 million for the state. The income tax bill is written so the rate will gradually drop back to 3.9 percent between 2011 and 2015.

Extending the sales tax to some services starting Dec. 1 will bring in an estimated \$614 million for the 10 months remaining in the fiscal year at that point, or about \$750 million annually, state Treasurer Robert Kleine said.

Rep. Craig DeRoche of Novi, the top Republican in the House, said he didn't want a government shutdown or higher taxes.

"I think it sets back Michigan's economy," he said.

The House and Senate also approved a controversial measure that would change the way some teacher and state worker health benefits are determined — a tough vote for many Democrats and some Republicans because it will affect an insurance affiliate of the Michigan Education Association, the state's largest teachers' union.

Political posturing over votes, with an eye toward the 2008 and 2010 elections, slowed down the process of getting a deal in place. Some vulnerable Democrats had resisted voting for a tax increase, while some Republicans worried they could face recalls if they supported a tax increase.

Associated Press Writer Kathy Barks Hoffman contributed to this report.

The income tax bill is House Bills 5194; the bill expanding the sales tax to services is House Bill 5198; the teacher health insurance bill is Senate Bill 418.0

State set to lay off workers

Most notified not to come in Monday if shutdown occurs

By Kathy Barks Hoffman
associated press writer

LANSING — State government starting Monday will attempt to limp along with limited state police patrols, no food safety inspections and just enough caseworkers to protect children and seniors if the governor and lawmakers fail to reach a budget deal that would avert a partial government shutdown.

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There was still hope Friday that a shutdown could be avoided if Gov. Jennifer Granholm and state lawmakers could strike a deal before the next fiscal year begins at midnight Sunday to fill a \$1.75 billion budget shortfall.

Slightly more than 35,000 of the state's more than 53,000 workers received notices Friday telling them not to report to work on Monday if a shutdown occurs, while the remainder — including 12,000 prison guards — were told they'd remain on duty to protect public health and safety.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm said Friday afternoon that a government shutdown would mean most government operations would cease, including food safety and gas pump inspections, liquor deliveries, lottery ticket sales, the issuance of driver's licenses and construction on state roads.

The three Detroit casinos would remain open, however. A Wayne County judge on Friday gave the trio permission to stay open even if the state is unable to oversee them during a shutdown.

Budget negotiations continued into Friday evening, and there was cautious optimism among some at the Capitol that an agreement was within reach.

The holdup in negotiations seemed less related to fights over the size of possible tax increases or spending cuts than over upcoming elections. Democratic leaders have tried in recent weeks to protect vulnerable lawmakers who could be hurt in the 2008 or 2010 elections by voting for a tax increase, while Republican leaders have worried that GOP legislators who support a tax increase could face recall threats.

State workers showed their displeasure over the budget impasse Friday morning during a spirited meeting during which the state Civil Service Commission deadlocked over whether they should change employment rules so workers could be laid off temporarily.

Judy Woodson, a specialist from Berrien County with the Department of Human Services, told the panel that food stamp recipients were worried about getting assistance if the state closed down Monday. She said state workers pay their taxes, love the state and want to work.

Her message for lawmakers was blunt: "You work for us," she said. "Do your job and stop asking for my blood."

If a shutdown occurred, horse racing would cease, along with job training and exports of dry beans, lumber, grain, fruits and vegetables headed to foreign countries.

Student loan payments would not be made, environmental permits would not be issued, state parks, recreation areas, state forest campgrounds and historical sites would be closed and voluntary admissions to state mental health facilities would not be allowed.

If the shutdown continued long enough, payments would not go out to K—12 school districts or to local governments as scheduled next month.

The Michigan State Police Troopers Association said it had been told that only 237 of the 1,554 troopers and sergeants that belong to it will be working if there's a shutdown.

"In addition to state police patrols across the state, support services to local law enforcement such as forensic science laboratories and homeland security are also being shut down due to this lockout," association president Mike Moorman said in a release. "Eighty—five percent of our troopers and sergeants (are) being locked out."

State workers were told that their Oct. 18 paychecks would be reduced to reflect any hours missed because of a shutdown from Sept. 23 through Oct. 6. They were given a phone number to call and a Web site to check to see if they should come to work Monday.

Legislative leaders and the Granholm administration remained tight—lipped Friday evening about possible progress, but talks were continuing.

Negotiations are centered on raising the state's personal income tax rate, now at 3.9 percent, to as high as 4.6 percent. Another key issue is expanding the state's sales tax to some services, although many in the business community are rallying against that proposal.

Other proposals to cut or restrict state spending and restructure the way government handles teacher and public employee benefits also are part of a possible budget deal.

So far, the House has been unable to pass a tax increase even though Democrats hold a 58—52 majority in the chamber, while Senate Republicans — who hold the edge in that chamber — haven't yet put up the votes for all of the government reforms they say they support.

Republicans continued to ask Granholm to accept a stopgap extension of the current budget to avoid a shutdown. But Democrats said they won't back the plan unless they have assurances that higher taxes to support education, public safety and health care are part of the deal because any delay will just cause the state deficit to grow.

The fight over what the budget deal should look like took to the airwaves Friday afternoon, as the Michigan Republican Party began running a 60—second radio ad saying the party doesn't agree with raising taxes and urging the governor to sign a budget extension.

The Michigan Democratic Party, meanwhile, put an ad on its Web site blaming the Republican Senate majority leader, Mike Bishop, if government shuts down.

The governor's office sent out a public service ad for broadcasters to air warning citizens this weekend that all noncritical state government offices and functions will be shut down Monday if no budget deal is reached.

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Associated Press Writers Tim Martin and David Eggert contributed to this report.

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On the Net:

Gov. Jennifer Granholm: <http://www.michigan.gov/gov>

Michigan Legislature: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

Click here to return to story:

http://www.hillsdale.net/stories/092907/news_20070929011.shtml

EDITORIAL: Michigan can still play well nationally -- here's how

September 30, 2007

The UAW struck. The state budget confrontation has been bruising.

None of this is news to Michiganders, who love their state but figure the audience in the rest of the country is ready to hoot us off the stage.

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That is not the case -- yet. But Michigan's disarray has reached a perilous point.

Decisions made now may set events in motion that will affect the state's reputation and its ability to perform for years.

Firms that work in employee recruitment and site selection do not dismiss Michigan. The UAW strike doesn't really matter because, as one Texan politely put it, companies that are "labor sensitive" weren't coming to Michigan anyway.

"You've got great universities, great R&D. Other than in the union complex, you've got excellent labor markets," said C.R. (Buzz) Canup Jr., president and CEO of Canup and Associates in Austin, Texas.

Camille Crist, executive director of Grant Cooper and Associates in St. Louis, Mo., a company that assists hospitals and physician practices with recruitment, said Michigan's main drawback -- and only to some recruits -- is its winter weather. "When it's quite cold up there, it can be harder to sell," she said.

Recruits generally are far more interested in the job itself or whether it will get them closer to family. When looking at Michigan, "so many times, they'll say it's a great hospital, or a great organization or a great position," Crist said.

Great schools

Universities and a quality medical system, the top of these two people's lists, are Michigan assets that often go unappreciated by the home crowd. They are also at risk if the state can't keep itself going.

The health of hospitals, plus the ability to attract doctors and other medical specialists, is woven tightly into the number of insured, including those who get coverage under Medicaid. Hospitals are required to treat anyone who shows up in their emergency rooms, insured or not. Every cut in Medicaid, a big target because it eats up so much of the state budget, endangers their fiscal health. And because Medicaid costs are shared roughly 50-50 with the federal government, cutting people or the level of coverage takes more money out of the health care system than just the amount represented by state taxes.

The less coverage by Medicaid, the shakier many Michigan hospitals -- most of which have fine reputations -- become.

State universities, often No. 1 in the national perception of what makes Michigan desirable, also will suffer if state support dwindles. Michigan State University Provost Kim Wilcox said Lansing's inaction is increasingly a topic of conversation when the university recruits faculty. While the uncertainty has yet to change a candidate's mind, he said the impact is undeniable.

"From afar, Michigan State and the University of Michigan have a halo that's pretty impressive," he said. "But that halo is at risk of getting a little tarnished as the state situation wanes."

At the intersection of higher education and medicine, Wayne State University has found success recruiting for its nursing program. New faculty have traded in positions at schools such as Seton Hall in New Jersey and the University of California, San Francisco, to come to Detroit.

Some of the trend is attributable to Michigan's dire need for nursing faculty and the fact that WSU is home to the first Center for Health Research within a nursing program. Such programs are precisely the sort of assets that can bring new lifeblood to Michigan, if they aren't overshadowed by shortsighted state leadership.

Work in Michigan?

For school districts hunting for strong leaders, Michigan's budget situation is already a deterrent.

Eight superintendent jobs sit open around the state, none in high-profile districts. But William H. Mayes, executive director of the Michigan Association of School Administrators, said he suspects even a high profile opening would be a difficult sell.

"We're competing with states that have their legislative and budget processes in order," Mayes said. Superintendent candidates, he explained, are "really concerned because they know they're going to be held accountable by school boards for the choices they make, though we have no budget to work with. They have no control."

Michigan's internal sense of crisis has also reached out-of-state job recruiters, who know they can more easily convince young college graduates here that their prospects are better if they leave.

Phil Gardner, director of the College Employment Research Institute at MSU and compiler of an annual national survey of employment trends for graduates, says about 60% of MSU's business and engineering graduates now leave Michigan, the highest numbers he has ever seen.

"Most kids who grew up here would really like to stay in Michigan, but they are willing to start their careers in other states, and they are being courted," Gardner said.

"Recruiters still like Michigan kids. They like the work ethic, and what I would describe as the blue-collar values. They're steady, dependable. They do the job."

And finally, from site selection executive Canup, comes a caution about how state budgeting affects nationwide reviews. Once a short list of sites is ready, he said, each state's financial strength -- bond ratings and debt, for example -- comes into play.

A reputation for competent budgeting can take years to rebuild once it is lost. If Michigan lets its assets erode and doesn't keep its own books in order, no one can claim surprise if the stage lights dim.

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Article published Sep 30, 2007

Canton woman accused of murdering child to stand trial

By **TIFFANY L. PARKS**
Staff Writer

Carol Poole, the Canton woman accused of intentionally causing the death of her 2-year-old foster daughter, will stand trial Jan. 7.

Poole, 42, has been charged with felony murder, first-degree child abuse and involuntary manslaughter in the September 2006 death of Allison Newman.

On Tuesday, Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Ulysses W. Boykin failed to make an immediate ruling on defense attorney Mark Satawa's request to suppress statements that Poole made to Canton Police in the hours after the child was rushed to the hospital.

Boykin is expected to issue a written decision by Oct. 12.

Satawa previously called in a forensic psychologist who testified that Poole was so emotionally distraught at the time of the questioning that she was unable to give a voluntary statement.

"She was under such enormous strain that she really didn't know what she was saying," Satawa said.

Wayne County Assistant Prosecutor Jerry Dorsey IV countered that Poole, who is being held in Wayne County Jail, was able to gather her thoughts well enough to offer police four different stories for Allison's injuries, including that she bumped her head in bed, fell in a bathtub and fell from a vanity.

The last story Poole told, which she says is the truth, is that she and Allison were playing "whirlybird" when the child accidentally fell over a second-story balcony.

"Mrs. Poole is a liar," Dorsey said repeatedly in court Tuesday.

During the proceedings, Poole's eyes filled with tears as she glanced at her husband, Alan, and at one point, she buried her face in her hands and sobbed.

While Satawa and Dorsey waited for Boykin to set a trial date, Allison's paternal grandfather, Kenneth Newman, rested his head on his knees and cried.

On Monday, Boykin rescheduled the hearing to Tuesday because Newman and Satawa got into a confrontation outside the courtroom.

"Sometimes emotions run high but this is a court of law," Boykin said.

Man sentenced for son's death

By VICTOR SKINNER

vskinner@record-eagle.com

September 29, 2007

TRAVERSE CITY -- Anthony Bishop stood flanked by two attorneys in a packed courtroom as Judge Thomas Power reviewed letters of support submitted shortly before the Kingsley man was sentenced for slaying his infant son.

"I do not think this is an intent to kill case at all," Power said, adding that Bishop, 22, has no prior criminal history. "I have no doubt this is, in fact, a manslaughter case and that is what he did."

Bishop pleaded guilty Sept. 5 to involuntary manslaughter and first-degree child abuse in a plea deal that dropped a potential life sentence for first-degree murder.

Power sentenced Bishop to five to 15 years in prison Friday.

Bishop was frustrated with his crying son and shook the infant violently Feb. 2 while watching his two children at his Kingsley home. Cole Curtis Bishop, 7 weeks, died at DeVos Children's Hospital two days later.

"I just want to say that I have realized what I have done and I want to put this behind me," Bishop said as sobs erupted from the nearly 30 friends and family who came to support him. "I just want to get this behind me and be a better person."

Bishop's attorneys, David Clark and Mike Hall, told the court they have grown close to their client in recent months, a man they described as a "nice guy."

"The law here allows for maybe a greater penalty than this person deserves," Hall said.

"What has bothered me is what is portrayed in the media and the state as a baby killer," said Clark.

That's exactly who Bishop is, county Prosecutor Alan Schneider said.

"There is no one here to speak on behalf of Cole Bishop. We are here because he killed his baby," Schneider said. "This could easily have been a murder conviction."

Bishop's father declined comment following the hearing. Bishop's wife and the mother of Cole Bishop appeared emotionally shaken as corrections officers took Anthony Bishop into custody.

"I love you honey," she said as officers applied shackles to Bishop.



No neglect charges in toddler's shooting death

MUNDY TOWNSHIP

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Saturday, September 29, 2007

By Bryn Mickle and Kim Crawford

Journal Staff Writers

MUNDY TWP. - The mother of a toddler who accidentally shot himself in the head with a pistol he found under a bed will not face charges in the boy's death.

But she and her husband may lose custody of her two surviving children.

Months of tests and investigation have led to the conclusion that 3-year-old Nicholas Herrick pulled the trigger on a 9mm semi-automatic pistol he found inside his parent's bedroom at their Brewer Road home about noon May 31.

His mother, Julie, 27, was asleep when Nicholas' 5-year-old sister heard a "boom" and found the boy dying and covered in blood next to the bed their mother was in, according to family court documents.

The neglect petition against the parents charges that Julie A. Herrick told authorities she didn't hear the shot, though she was sleeping just a few feet away.

Investigators spent about four months trying to determine what exactly happened, including performing tests to see if Nicholas was strong enough to fire the gun.

Police seized five guns from the home of Nathan and Julie Herrick, including three loaded pistols and two rifles, according to court documents.

A long gun case was found propped open near the bed where Julie Herrick was asleep. Inside the case, police found toy cars.

The 5-year-old girl told authorities she was aware there were two gun cases under the bed.

"These are very difficult decisions," said Genesee County Prosecutor David S. Leyton.

Although prosecutors could have sought criminal neglect charges against Nicholas' parents, Leyton said the loss of their child is the worst punishment they can suffer.

Leyton made a similar decision last year when he decided not to file charges in the accidental shooting death of a 9-year-old Flint girl. In that case, a 10-year-old boy killed his playmate with a shotgun he thought was a BB gun.

The boy found the shotgun in the girl's home, but Leyton declined to pursue criminal negligence against the girl's parents for allowing children to have access to a loaded gun.

The Herricks' attorney, Michael P. Manley, called Leyton's decision "fair and compassionate."

"The family is very relieved with the decision and may truly begin the grieving process for the loss of their son," Manley said.

While no one will face criminal charges in Nicholas' death, a Nov. 30 trial is set to determine if his mother and father will lose their parental rights to two other children.

Nicholas' sisters, ages 5 and 9, were taken from the home by Child Protective Services and made temporary wards of the court after the shooting. The older girl is Julie Herrick's daughter with a man who lives in the Detroit area, court records show.

A neglect petition by a CPS investigator filed in the days after Nicholas died charged that loaded firearms were left under a bed without gun locks. The petition alleged other instances of neglect, including;

A neighbor's claim that two or three years ago, Julie Herrick took more than an hour to realize her youngest daughter, then a toddler, had walked outside wearing only a bathing suit in the winter. The neighbor took in the little girl, warmed her up, fed her and played with her until the mother came over looking for her.

Nicholas was treated for an accidental overdose of prescription strength Tylenol with codeine in January. Julie Herrick brought her son in for treatment after he ate two tablets, but the petition alleged there is no record that she followed up and took her son to the family doctor, as the hospital instructed.

An incident in which a Mundy Township woman found Nicholas walking alone on the road just two days before he shot himself. The woman knocked on the Herricks' door, waking Julie Herrick up to let her know she had found the toddler, according to the petition.

The neglect case against the Herricks, filed June 8, asked a judge to remove the remaining children from the home and terminate the parents' rights. It charged that it was "contrary to the welfare of the two children to remain in the house because (their) sibling died as a result of (a) gunshot wound. Guns were left in home (that were) accessible to children."

Nathan Herrick, 33, told police after his son's death that he didn't know where his guns were in the house, the petition said.

Julie Herrick told social workers she had set her 5-year-old daughter up to play computer games while she and her son went into her bedroom on the morning of the incident.

Herrick said she was awakened by her daughter and found her son at the foot of the bed. She initially told investigators when she awoke she thought her son was asleep.

Toxicology tests on the mother were negative, said Leyton.

In hearings that followed the filing of the petition, the two girls were made temporary wards of the court and placed in separate households, with the parents allowed visitation.

Manley said he is "hopeful that process can be amicably resolved as well."

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Bill calls for equal parenting time

Of The Oakland Press

Scott Hudson of Waterford Township said his 3 1/2-year-old daughter, Paulina, is a sweet little kid with curly hair who speaks English and French, but doesn't really understand why she doesn't see her dad much anymore.

Paulina's mother, Christine, was granted the majority of custody time and allowed to move both of them to France, Christine's home country.

"The six times I've gone to France after being away from her for four or six weeks, I've never seen such a happy expression on her face and I'm sure, if I could see my own expression, it'd be the same way," Hudson said.

Although a courtordered psychologist found the "12 best interests of the child factors" to be equal with both parents, Christine, Hudson's ex-wife, was given 10 months custody in France, and Hudson received just two months during the summer in the United States, plus unrestricted visitation in France with two weeks' notice.

Christine's attorney, Randi Glanz, said the court-ordered psychologist Hudson referred to was just one of many experts who testified in this case.

"This was a very lengthy case, but the judge made a determination that what would be best for this child is to go back home to France, where she was born," Glanz said. Hudson said his exwife returned to France to give birth because her sister-in-law is a midwife.

Michigan law prevents a custodial parent from moving more than 100 miles away from the noncustodial parent. However, the custodial parent can file a motion with the court to get permission to do so.

"It's so sad it has to be like this," Hudson said.

Hudson's experience led him to join a rally last week in Lansing on the Capitol steps, where about 60 people showed up to support House Bill 4564.

The bill calls for equal parenting time for fit parents.

"If both parents are fit, the courts still tend to lean toward the mother, but we're trying to make it equal," said state Rep. Fran Amos, R-Waterford Township.

The bill was proposed by state Rep. Glenn Steil, R-Cascade; and introduced with the support of Reps. Amos, Marty Knollenberg, R-Troy; John Stakoe, R-Highland Township; James Marleau, R-Lake Orion; and 18 other representatives. It is currently in the Families and Children's Services Committee.

"The committee chair has full discretion as to what he or she wants to hear, and you have to get it out of committee before you can get it over to the House floor," said Knollenberg. "Unfortunately, (bills remain in committee) often."

Rep. Brenda Clack, D-Flint, is the chairwoman for the committee. Clack could not be reached for comment.

Hudson ran for state representative against Fran Amos in 2004 and lost, but said he wants to

run again in 2008.

"My first cause would be to see equal parenting instituted," Hudson said.

Hudson, 58, is the vice president of the Waterford Board of Education, a real estate broker and the executive director of eBlind, a nonprofit organization that gives instruction for using computers to blind and visually impaired people.

"I feel like I was wronged, and most of all, that my daughter was wronged," Hudson said.

Hudson and Christine met while both were on a trip in the Himalayas. Christine later moved to the United States to be with Hudson. She became a registered nurse and had her green card when the two decided to split up in 2006.

During the five-day divorce and custody trial, Hudson was denied any witnesses to speak to his credibility. His lawyer prepared the witness list two weeks in advance, but went on vacation and ended up turning in the list one day late, Hudson said.

"I couldn't have anybody to dispute the things said by my exwife - I'm still stunned by that," Hudson said.

Suzanne Hollyer, president of the Michigan Friend of the Court Association, said this bill limits a judge's discretion. It makes equal parenting time a default, and anything different would have to be argued for.

Another bill also introduced, HB 4818, adds equal parenting time as one of the 12 best interests of the child factors, said Gabe Basso, Amos' legislative director.

"It seems more appropriate for the legislators to say, 'This is important to us, consider it,' " Hollyer said about HB 4818.

As for limiting judges' discretion with HB 4564, James Alexander, the presiding judge of the Family Division of Oakland County Circuit Court, said he is "absolutely opposed."

"All of the judges walk in with the presumption both parents need to be involved in raising the child," Alexander said. "Telling us specifically what we need to do and taking away judicial discretion means maybe having to do things that are in not the child's best interest."

Alexander said that though more custody time has been given to mothers historically, that is changing dramatically now because more fathers want to be involved.

Glanz said the judge's decision in Hudson's case was not flippant.

"The judge really carefully considered all the issues and ultimately, my client was given physical custody. These cases are never easy, but then, divorce isn't easy," Glanz said.

Basso said the bill's chances of passing are slim to none.

Contact staff writer Karen Auchterlonie at (248) 745-4643 or karen@oakpress.com.

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Article published Oct 1, 2007

Sweep nets back support, arrests

By Lisa Roose-Church
DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

The Livingston County Friend of the Court took a proactive approach to collecting back child support with a recent warrant sweep, which netted nearly \$9,000 in unpaid support.

Five people were arrested and four turned themselves in during the two-day sweep Tuesday and Thursday. Those nine people represent a combined total of more than \$131,000 in unpaid child support affecting 13 children.

Friend of the Court Melissa Scharrer said she plans to conduct similar sweeps in the future.

"We do know the economy is poor, but the children still need to be supported," she said. "In general terms, I look at it that if that child were sitting across from you at the dinner table, you would find a way to support that child, whatever it takes."

One of those arrested, Roy Nolan, pleaded guilty Friday in Livingston County Circuit Court to failing to pay child support. Nolan, who owes more than \$13,000 in unpaid child support, was sentenced to 45 days behind bars.

Three additional people arrested in the sweep are expected to appear in court today, and one paid off his debt in full.

The sweep was conducted in cooperation with the Livingston County Sheriff's Department, which sent deputies to conduct the necessary arrests.

"I want to thank Sheriff (Bob) Bezotte; we're very appreciative of him allowing us to work with his department," Scharrer said.

Mothers or fathers who need assistance in a child support case are encouraged to call the Livingston County Friend of the Court at (517) 546-0230.

Contact Daily Press & Argus reporter Lisa Roose-Church at (517) 552-2846 or at lrchurch@gannett.com.



— THE — ANN ARBOR NEWS

Agency, DHS work to match kids with homes

Transition may be hard in acceptance

Saturday, September 29, 2007

BY PAUL NUCCI

News Special Writer

Bringing a child into a foster home can be difficult for everyone concerned. Because the child may already be exhibiting behavioral problems, parents are told to expect tough times.

Through it all, the Judson Center and the Michigan Department of Human Services aim to match a child with the right home.

When a foster parent accepts a child into the home, the transition may be hard.

"They come with such baggage, and they don't trust adults. Why should they trust adults? They have had experiences no child should go through," said Dennis Patrick, of Superior Township, who has had several years of experience with the foster system. "Many will act out in different ways."

One piece of baggage is called "radical attachment disorder," which means a child who has been abused has difficulty trusting adults, especially strangers.

"We try and give them space and let them know we are here if needed, but entering a new home is traumatic for a child," Patrick said.

Sometimes, the transition is smooth and the child will adjust. With four adopted boys in his home previously from foster care, Patrick offers a haven based on awareness for foster children he takes in.

"My boys were in the system, and they know what these kids are going through. It's amazing to watch because the minute they enter the home, there is a connection they have. It definitely helps the transition."

The state's "Family to Family" program was designed to strengthen and stabilize the families in need before foster care is required.

The goal is nothing short of reducing the number of children in foster care.

The state also works toward keep siblings together if possible. Until recently, it was the norm to send a child from Wayne County to northern Michigan to stay with foster parents. Now, the state works to keep the children close by, within the same area code, or even the same school district.

In some instances, local groups will actually drive the child from the foster home to the original school to help maintain stability for the child. The tasks are often done before and after work hours, often on the helpers' own time.

Stability and connection with the birth parents are called essential to a successful reunion when the environment is suitable for their return.

Professionals say simply talking with others has become an excellent coping vehicle for many foster parents.

"Sometimes, we just vent to each other, and it helps," said Patrick. "We are all going through the same things and same situations, and sharing can help you deal with the challenges we face."

Roxanne Hart, who like Patrick has become a foster children's advocate, also has adopted four boys (ages 6-12) who had been under her foster care.

"Sharing with other parents is important," she said. "Some of these children have severe issues, and foster parents need to use whatever tools they can to deal with the problems; and other foster parents are a great resource."

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THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Foster care challenging but rewarding

Saturday, September 29, 2007

BY PAUL NUCCI

News Special Writer

The phone can ring any time, day or night.

"We have a child that needs immediate help. Can we drop him off tonight? This morning? Tomorrow?" the agency asks.

Often on a day's notice or less, foster parents need to be ready to open their home to a child.

Such was the case for Roxanne Hart, a foster care provider for nearly 10 years along with her husband, Mark, in Willis.

Emergency care situations know no bounds nor do they respect holidays. The call comes, and you have to act.

"It was the day before Thanksgiving at 11:30 p.m. when we got a call," said Hart.

A 4-year-old child had been kidnapped by a relative but she had been located and was safe. The child needed a place to sleep for the night, and Hart was asked to provide it. Suddenly, making stuffing seemed less important.

"This poor girl arrived in the middle of the night, asleep," she said. "Two policemen had bought her a Happy Meal earlier. Now, she was going to wake up the next morning, after her traumatic experience, in a new home with people she did not know."

Hart says the child woke up crying, but she soon convinced the little one she was in a safe and friendly place and her "pappy" was on the way to pick her up soon. The crying stopped.

"It was like she made a conscious decision to be resilient," Hart said. "To deal with the situation, and at her age! Adults would complain and complain; she just dealt with it."

Dennis Patrick is used to getting the calls as a registered foster care parent in Michigan for more than six years.

Patrick, a professor in the department of communication and theater arts at Eastern Michigan University, went a step further when he adopted four boys ages 5-11 who had been placed in his home for foster care. He adopted them when the parental rights for the children were terminated between 2002 and 2006. They live with Dennis and his partner, Thomas Patrick, at their home in Superior Township. Dennis Patrick adopted Josh in 2002 and Paul was the most recent adoption, last year Joey and Raul were adopted in 2003. Dennis initially adopted all four boys so they would be covered by health insurance. They later did a second parental adoption with Thomas.

To Dennis Patrick, helping children in need is a worthy cause.

"The rewards you get from helping children feel safe and secure and loved cannot be measured," Patrick said. "The personal satisfaction from helping kids in need is immense. There is no better feeling."

The child could be placed on a short- or long-term or even emergency basis. Once a child is removed from birth parents, he or she needs a place to stay immediately.

Despite the many challenges, or because of them, Dennis Patrick has become an advocate and tries to encourage others to become parents. "If I can share my story, and others become parents that would be wonderful."

On May 23, during National Foster Care Month, the Judson Center in Ann Arbor held an informational forum at the Ypsilanti District Library to discuss "Experiences of Foster Care" featuring two current foster parents and a former parent. Dennis Patrick was one of the speakers.

There are about 7,000 registered foster care homes in Michigan. In 2006, there were 18,341 children in foster care in the state; 85 percent were in out-of-home placement.

According to the Judson Center, a nonprofit human services agency that contracts with the state Department of Human Services, it provided foster care services to 58 children in the Washtenaw County area over the past 12 months. Of that number, 25 were deemed eligible for adoption or have been adopted. The DHS provides funding to the center for each child adopted. The amount of the aid is based on an age scale.

Although he would take in every child in the system if he could, Dennis Patrick understands that the quest for new parents is never-ending.

"We can't save the world by ourselves. We can only talk about why we do it and recruit others," he said.

Jennifer Kiehl, supervisor of licensing, adoption and foster care in the Ann Arbor office of the Judson Center, says the forum's goals are simple: to help inform the public about foster parenting and bring parents into the system.

The ultimate goal of foster care is reunification with the birth parents or legal guardian.

"You can fall in love with these kids quickly," added Patrick. "It's not easy to say goodbye, but we do it. That is how the system works."

Most parents will say that while fostering a child in need is hard, giving them back to their parents can be even harder.

"The bond we have with these children can grow quickly and be just as strong (as a birth parent)," said Hart.

Only a parent in the system can adequately describe the joys they receive.

"We receive some praise from others, and we get personal joy, but we are not the heroes here," added Hart. "These kids have been through more in a few years than most of us have in a lifetime. They are the heroes."

People often comment that the foster children Dennis Patrick takes in are lucky to be placed in such a home.

He disagrees.

"We are the lucky ones, the foster parents. When I get home and the kids rush up to hug me, that is when it's all worthwhile. Being a foster parent is a lot of work, but those moments make it seem easy. It's the best feeling in the world.

Patrick tells a story that makes him most proud.

"We have a dry erase board in the house for various things the kids use it for," he said. "Once, when I got home from work, there was something drawn on the board. It read, 'I (heart) daddy.' ... That was a special moment for me."

More information is available online at www.michigan.gov/dhs.



— THE — ANN ARBOR NEWS

Farm family shares bounty Raspberry patch, foster children part of a theme

Friday, September 28, 2007

News Staff Reporter

Tucked around a family home north of Fowlerville is a raspberry patch ready for picking and the fruits of a family ripe with giving.

Over the past three years, Gwen and Paul Kato of Conway Township have opened their one-acre berry patch for the U-pick crowd each fall under the moniker Rainbow's End Farm, allowing visitors to wander among 1,200 plants in search of the best \$3 quart they can find.

During the same period, the family has expanded from mom, dad and two teens to include three sisters from the African nation of Botswana, who have been in their care as a foster family over the past three years.

"We have so much - why can't we give more?" said Gwen Kato, reflecting on why the couple decided to foster the girls. "It was good for my kids. We don't realize how much we have to offer until we open our hearts and try it."

The Katos' foster family includes Prudence, 20, a recent high school graduate who now lives in Lansing with Paul Kato's family and attends Lansing Community College, as well as Eden, 11, and Ruth, 9 who attend the Fowlerville Community Schools. Gwen Kato said the girls will remain with the family as long as is needed, although she hopes they can someday be reunited with their mother, who is living in Canada.

The girls were left behind in the United States by their natural parents in 2003 and were taken into the foster care system through Lutheran Social Services, which arranged for the Katos to take them in.

"They called and said, 'We have two under 10, with bonus: a big sister.' We said, 'I guess this was meant to be.'"

The family has a passion for Africa and its culture. Paul, a teacher in Mason who also is director of coaching for the Brighton Soccer Club, grew up in Nigeria and Kenya.

Their daughter, Celeste, also has taken a special interest in Africa, doing her senior service project at Culver Academy in Indiana, where she attends high school, to raise money to ship a crate full of computer equipment and books to the Pistis school in Kenya.

"This project has really shown me all of the leadership skills that my school has taught about in the past four years," Celeste Kato said. "As a teenager, it has been hard to see how doing one project could make any difference to anyone, but now I see ... that taking the time to put together this material for students in Kenya will mean more to them than I could imagine."

She said she hopes to visit Kenya someday and see the donated materials used by the African children.

Christian Resources International is a Fowlerville-based nonprofit ministry that she is working with to accomplish her project.

Gwen Kato grew up across the street on the family farm on Mohrle Road and returned to her roots eight years ago with Paul, after living in Kalamazoo. What she discovered was that, despite living in a rural area, it was tough to find locally grown produce.

So, she helped to start the Fowlerville Farmers Market, which is Wednesdays from 3 to 8 p.m. in the municipal parking lot downtown.

"Health is very important to me. I have a passion for it," she said.

Now, she just focuses on the family's raspberry patch, but also carries forward her focus on local food. She raises lambs every other year and also has raised beef to help feed the family, and they enjoy raw milk from the family farm across the road.

"So many of our health problems could be solved if people would eat from the earth and not the shelf," she said.

Casey Hans can be reached at [chans@livingstoncommunitynews](mailto:chans@livingstoncommunitynews.com)

.com or at 810-844-2005.

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FORMER FOSTER CHILD HAS OVERCOME ADVERSITY

Coming of age

By Brad Kadrich
STAFF WRITER

Jasmine Millwood and her sisters spent a good deal of their childhood bouncing around the foster care system.

They'd go to one foster family, and then children's services agencies would try - unsuccessfully - to reunite them with their biological parents. When it didn't work out, the girls were shipped back into the foster care system.

▼ ADVERTISEMENT ▼ They suffered physical abuse and mental abuse, the kind children's services officials say can cripple a child's self-esteem and confidence.

That's why it was so special for Millwood, 19 and a Plymouth Township resident, to step onto the stage at the McMorran Place Theater in Port Huron last weekend for the Miss Michigan USA pageant.

It was, she said, the latest step in her journey to overcome her upbringing and showed, she thinks, that she's all grown up.

"I've never done anything like this before," said Millwood, a Canton High School graduate now attending Schoolcraft College. "Until I was a freshman in college, I didn't have any confidence. Me being up on stage in a bathing suit is a side of me nobody's ever seen."

AN ACCIDENT?

Millwood's physical participation in the pageant was almost accidental. She got a letter in the mail and was going to discard it before a conversation with her best friend, Lindsay Burke, who urged her to reconsider.

Burke, 19 and a Canton resident, knew Millwood's life story, and thought entering the pageant might be a way to show how much her friend had overcome. After some cajoling, Burke was able to convince Millwood to enter.

"She's been through so much in her life, with her childhood and everything," Burke said. "It's not something she would have done. If she hadn't called me, I'm sure she would have just forgotten about it. But I told her, 'Why not do it, have fun, meet some new friends and have a good time?'"

It wasn't something the old Jasmine Millwood would have done. The lifelong foster child hadn't developed the grit necessary to face situations like that. From an early age, Millwood and her sisters - twin Camai and older sister Fawna - began moving around the foster care system. There were three or



Bill Bresler | staff photographer

Jasmine Millwood has become a team Services, which sponsored her particip

The Millwood File

n Who: Jasmine Millwood
n Age: 19
n Residence: Plymouth Townshi
n Education: Canton High Schoc
student
n Family: Adoptive father, Richai
and Fawna
n Hopes: To be an orthodontist

four homes, plus the two-year stint reunited with their biological father and stepmother, where the physical and mental abuse got bad enough for Millwood to refer to it as "an extreme child abuse case ... one of the most horrendous in Michigan."

TO THE RESCUE

They were finally rescued - Millwood's word for it - by their uncle, Richard Reaume, with whom they spent time in between foster homes and have, since 1997, lived permanently.

"Foster time was the worst time of my life," said Millwood, who said she weighed 52 pounds and measured 52 inches when she left her father's care. "My uncle rescued us. He didn't intend to adopt us, but he realized how hard it was for us to keep moving around. He put his life on hold and said he would take us."

Reaume, who had taken care of the children at various times through their struggles, finally realized if they were to have any stability at all, it was going to be with him.

"They'd go to a foster home, then they'd try to unite them with their father or mother, and it wouldn't work, and they'd go back to a different foster home," said Reaume, now the Plymouth Township supervisor. "They were yo-yo children ... bouncing around the system. They'd go to a foster home, then they'd try to unite them with their father or mother, and it wouldn't work, and they'd go back to a different foster home."

"After quite a few years, it became apparent their biological parents weren't going to succeed in straightening out their lives," Reaume added. "They weren't in a stable environment, so I volunteered to become their foster parent, and I took them in."

OPENING DOORS

And, ultimately, adopted them, an adoption arranged by Orchards Children Services, the caretakers of the Millwood file who by then had come to symbolize the troubled lives they'd led.

Ironically, it was largely this group she'd come to despise as a child that made her participation in the pageant possible. The day after she e-mailed someone at Orchards that she'd be participating in the pageant, Orchards CEO Michael Williams called to say the group would sponsor her.

"Our No. 1 philosophy is that any child who's been in Orchards will always be an Orchards child, because we think it's important that no child feels left out," Williams said. "(Millwood's) experiences were up and down. We talked with her about what needs to be done to change the culture for adults and children, what she can share to help other children."

Orchards, according to Millwood, has now "opened so many doors." She gave a speech at the Detroit Red Wings Alumni Dinner. She hopes to set up a "small, pageant-like event" for foster children, and start a program about self-confidence and goals.

It will be good, according to Williams, for other foster children to see examples of Millwood's success.

"A lot of kids who come here, some of the challenges they face, sometimes their families, who are supposed to love you the most hurt you," the Orchards CEO said. "Kids feel hopeless ... Kids see someone who has overcome that and been successful, and they feel hopeful."



Bill Bresler | staff photographer

Jasmine Millwood finished just a few s
Miss Michgian USA pageant in Port H

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Millwood said she's also finished a 250-page book, largely about life with her biological father, that she started as a seventh-grader.

"The last chapter gives me goose bumps," she said. "I found the strength and confidence in the depths of my soul."

Her participation in the pageant taught Millwood something she loves to share with other children as a spokeswoman for Orchards Children's Services.

"I've never been emotional about my past, I was never shy telling people what happened," Millwood said. "But with all that has happened, it really hit me - never, ever give up on your dreams. You can do something great."

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STORYCHAT 

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Originally published September 30, 2007



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Scouts support foster care visits

By Christy Strawser
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

The couch was ripped in the room where foster children visit their biological parents at the Macomb County Department of Human Services, and that sad, broken-down image stuck with a Girl Scout troop from Armada.

Bothered after they took a tour of the building last fall, the girls in Troop 728 decided to do something about the tattered furniture and lack of comfort foster kids get when reuniting with their estranged parents.

The nine-member troop got to work selling cookies, sewing and collecting bottles -- all in an effort to make the room better.

Their hard work paid off Thursday when the girls showed up at the department loaded down with bags and boxes of board games and fleece blankets that fold into big pillows. A new couch will be delivered later.

The troop raised about \$1,300 in a year, including a grant from the Four-County Foundation, and spent \$500 of it on games like "Boggle" and "Yahtzee" to get kids to interact with adults. Marsha DeLong of the human services department was overjoyed to get them.

"We are just thrilled," DeLong said, profusely thanking the girls and their troop leaders.

One of her favorite donations was a portable puppet theater and bags of finger puppets she said counselors will use to help kids talk about their feelings.

"It's wonderful for them to be able to do that," DeLong said.

DeLong gave the girls, 11 and 12 years old, a certificate of appreciation, and they told her they won a bronze award for their effort, the highest honor a junior girl scout can get.

"You earned it," DeLong said.

For their part, the girls said the donation made them feel "really good," with one adding, "Next year, we're going to get the silver award."

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Published September 30, 2007

Discussion aimed at recruiting foster, adoptive families

CHARLOTTE — The Eaton County Foster & Adoptive Support Network, along with the Eaton County Department of Human Services will hold a panel discussion from 4 to 5:30 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 6 at the Assembly of God Church in Charlotte, 1100 E. Clinton Trail. The panel consists of foster and adoptive parents, as well as former foster children, who will talk about their experiences and answer your questions.

Foster and adoptive homes are always needed in Eaton County, especially for older children and sibling groups. These children have been temporarily or permanently removed from their homes because their parents aren't able to provide a safe environment. Eaton County participates in the "Family to Family" initiative which emphasizes keeping foster children in their communities.

Foster families come in all shapes, sizes, and ages, including single parents, families with biological children, working parents, stay-at-home parents, retirees, etc. You just need the time, training, and commitment to care for a foster child, along with 40 square feet of bedroom floor space per person. You don't have to be rich to be a foster family, however you need enough regular income to support your family. Foster parents receive a stipend to care for foster children and day care assistance while they're working. As foster parents, you determine the ages and number of children placed in your home. Some families foster one or two children, while others care for larger sibling groups so brothers and sisters can stay together.

The initial goal for most children in the system is reunification with their birth family. However, when that goal is not possible, the goal often becomes adoption. Some foster families adopt children who have been in their care, while others continue to foster until an adoptive home is located. In Fiscal Year 2003, 55% of the children adopted through the child welfare system in Michigan were adopted by their foster parents.

Eaton County foster and adoptive families do not have to "go it alone." The Eaton County Foster & Adoptive Support Network meets the first Thursday of every month at Charlotte's Assembly of God Church. The group offers training to foster and adoptive parents, recreational opportunities, as well as a supportive network of people who understand the unique issues, challenges, and rewards of foster and adoptive families.

If you'd like to know how to make a difference in a child's life, if you want more meaning and purpose in your own life, if you enjoy working with children and have the heart to commit to a child in need, you'll want to attend this meeting. If you're inspired by what you hear and want to get involved, you can register for a free, no-obligation foster parent training class that runs four Saturdays in a row starting Oct. 20. The classes will be held at DHS in Charlotte.

For information about the panel discussion, contact Michael Henderson at (517) 663-9045. For information about the foster parent training classes, contact Debbie McDonald at DHS, (517) 543-5934.

— *From the Eaton County Foster & Adoptive Support Network.*

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Accused teen bus shooter going to trial

Updated: Sep 28, 2007 05:20 PM EDT

BATTLE CREEK -- A Battle Creek teenager who police say shot multiple bullets at a school bus will go to trial.

It was September 12 when the incident occurred at the intersection of West Street and Garfield Avenue. Fifteen students on the bus were not injured.

Calhoun County prosecutors want to try the 16-year-old suspect as an adult on 58 charges.



The teen waived his arraignment in juvenile court Friday morning.

His attorney requested a bond reduction but the judge denied it.

The suspect will remain in a juvenile detention facility until appearing in court in October.



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— THE — ANN ARBOR NEWS

Sex assault charges stir anger at schools

Victim's father criticizes response by Howell officials at forum

Friday, September 28, 2007

BY TOM TOLEN

News Staff Reporter

Parents vented their anger and school board trustees vowed to straighten out the mess during an emotional public forum Monday night, called after two young boys - ages 9 and 11 - were charged with sexually assaulting a 7-year-old on a Howell school bus.

The incident came to light recently after the suspects appeared in juvenile court. But police have been investigating the incident since May when it was reported to Southwest Elementary School Principal Jill Hilla, who called police.

But apparently the information was not reported to Superintendent Chuck Breiner or the school board.

One of the two boys has been suspended from school and the other is "voluntarily out of school pending the outcome of the prosecutorial process," said Deputy Superintendent for Labor Relations and Personnel Lynn Parrish. The two boys face criminal sexual conduct charges in juvenile court.

The victim is receiving psychological counseling, but has been scarred by the incident, his father said. The boy's father vented his anger and frustration, saying the other boys involved should have been immediately expelled from school.

"This is something that is going to stick with my child until the day he dies," he told the school board.

"I feel somebody dropped the ball," the father said, saying the Southwest principal should be fired. "You are trying to cover up something."

Others in the audience later came to Hilla's defense, and some wore T-shirts expressing support.

The father also chastised the board for its lack of knowledge about the incident until last week. "If, (for instance), it's a kid with a knife, the board is supposed to know about it," he said.

The incident was the latest in a series of episodes that have created unwanted headlines for the school district in the last couple of years. First it was the placement of a Diversity Club flag at Howell High School, which some perceived as promoting homosexuality. Then the Livingston Organization for Values in Education also attempted to have several books banned because of violent or sexual content.

More recently there has been controversy over the decision to privatize custodial services, putting 38 custodians out of work, and over bus rides that can take nearly two hours for some students.

"I am concerned that we as a district are always involved in controversy, and I implore you as a board to find solutions," said parent Lori Mazzullo.

"In my view, this is greater than a Howell school problem, it's a microcosm of our society," said Merrill Lundgren of Brighton, a man who works with school children to build their self-esteem.

"Don't let your investigation stop with this incident," urged Vicki Fyke, founder of the LOVE group. "Older kids have problems with bullying and teasing, and you've got to go across the board," she said.

Board members also weighed in on the bus incident.

"I'd like to protect every child, and sometimes we can't do this," said board Secretary Sue Drazik. "We are going to get to the bottom of this, and this is something we can't do overnight."

Trustee Wendy Day said the board has lost the trust and confidence of the public that it once had. "We have a huge responsibility to regain that trust," Day said.

"I believe the board is committed to restoring that (level of public confidence)," said board Treasurer Ed Literski.

Breiner said the district has retained the services of its law firm to investigate an apparent communications breakdown. Attorneys will be interviewing seven district employees, from bus drivers to administrators, to find out what really happened, Breiner said.

A new policy instituted by the district Monday requires school bus passengers to shift toward the front as the bus empties. Some in the packed audience at the Howell Freshman Campus auditorium suggested the district allow parent volunteers ride on the buses to monitor students.

After the meeting, Breiner said he heard many messages from residents at the forum. "I heard anger, frustration, a demand for change, a concern for the safety and welfare of children and, not least, the pain of the victim's parent," he said.

Tom Tolen can be reached at 810-844-2009 or ttolen@livingstoncommunitynews.com.

Rick Fitzgerald on challenges to Livingston County communities, B1

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Article published Sep 30, 2007

Maria Stuart: Books, tolerance did not cause bus assault

It's nearly unthinkable that two Howell Public Schools elementary boys, ages 9 and 11, are charged with sexually assaulting a 7-year-old boy on a bus ride home in May.

This terrible, tragic case, which has forever changed the lives of the three boys involved, has also stomped on one of our community's collective nerves.

As we go through this together as a community, we need to maintain our sense of objectivity and common sense. That is sometimes difficult to do when situations are so highly charged.

Sexual assaults are horrible things that alter lives forever. To think that children are sexually abusing other children goes against everything we want to believe about the innocence of childhood.

It's more comforting to assume that the capacity to commit such assaults is solely the domain of twisted adults.

As caring humans, we search for reasons why such awful things happen, perhaps as much to convince ourselves that it can't possibly happen to our own kids as much as to find an object of blame against which we can rail.

That said, I've been struck by some of the conversations swirling around the case.

There are some using this tragedy as proof that the Howell Public Schools district has created a climate ripe for sexual assault, that the fact it happened here has meaning far beyond the assault itself.

The district has been rightfully criticized by many for the way it's reported the case internally and to the community.

However, there are those who go further. They point accusing fingers at the district and blame the assault as a consequence of books assigned in the high school and on the district's practice of teaching that everyone — including gays — deserve to be treated with respect.

While this assault has weighed heavily on me for lots of different reasons, I am also troubled by the misguided rush on the part of some to place blame on the district, books, tolerance and homosexuality.

The district didn't cause the assault. The district didn't create a climate conducive to an assault.

As horrible as it sounds — and I cringe as I write this — sexual assaults on children by children aren't quite as rare in Livingston County as we might think.

"They happen," said Marilyn Bradford of the Livingston County Prosecutor's Office. "And they're not in any one school or any one district."

Consider these numbers:

Last year, LACASA, the organization in Livingston County that deals with victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse, saw 251 kids between September 2005 and September 2006. Of those kids, 196 reported being sexually abused.

I don't know how many of the perpetrators were also children, but we'd be naive to believe that they're all adults.

A quick search of the Internet turned up other reports in media across the country of students sexually abusing other students aboard school buses: girls assaulting girls; boys assaulting girls; boys assaulting boys.

These are kids who don't go to school in Howell.

That such a thing could have happened is tragic. It's horrid for the victim; it's upsetting to our community.

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Article published Sep 30, 2007

Agency looks to serve youth, make a difference

By Diane Gale Andreassi

SPECIAL WRITER

Founders of a new agency designed to help young people avoid trouble is hoping some of the kids who will one day use the building will help paint it.

Marie May, president and CEO of A New Day Agency, and Charie Springfield, vice president and COO, recently visited a South Redford school board meeting to ask for help in getting kids involved.

The walls of the building on Schoolcraft Road at Inkster need painting, the carpet is ripped from the floor and room partitions are going up and coming down. Getting kids involved in painting the inside walls might inspire them to visit when the doors open, sometime in November.

"If they have an opportunity to do things in the center they'll say, 'Look that's the wall I did.' I think it will help them feel more comfortable," Springfield says.

The agency is a brand new non-profit organization helping young people in grades 6-12 with counseling, discussion sessions, workshops, advocacy and tutoring programs that are free for clients.

May and Springfield plan to approach all western Wayne County school officials to make district social workers and teachers aware of A New Day Agency services so they can pass along the information to students.

MANY IN TURMOIL

May and Springfield have been building on this idea for two years and recently found the building on Schoolcraft. They say it's centrally located for all western county communities, including Redford, Livonia, Westland, Garden City, Canton, Plymouth, Romulus and Inkster.

"A lot of people think people in the suburbs don't need help," May says. "Unfortunately everyone needs help."

The funding will come from donations, state and federal grant money, as well as adult workshops that will include a fee.

"There's so much turmoil right now with the youth," Springfield says.

Currently May works as a subcontractor with the Wayne County Juvenile Assessment Center, which is separate from A New Day Agency. She sees young people who are already involved in the juvenile court system. May is a licensed professional counselor and Springfield's degree is in human services.

"Pretty much we plan to talk about drugs, violence, peer pressure, eating disorders and everything that is going on around them," May says. "The idea behind the agency is that we are a prevention center. We would like to get the kids before they get in trouble and get into the juvenile system and get themselves in a negative situation. We can show them a different alternative and we're hoping to be a provider and bring out a positive influence."

The idea came about when both were studying psychology and they were brainstorming about what to do with the degrees.

"I knew that the need was so great and the kids need so much guidance," May says. "That age group has the greatest need. I had the house where people came," says May, a mother of two - an 18-year-old son and 12-year-old daughter. She also worked as a mentor for foster children, volunteered at shelters and worked as a certified day care provider.

PART OF THE VILLAGE

Both women live in Canton and once lived in Redford. In fact, Springfield graduated from Thurston High School in 2002 and

attended Jane Addams Elementary and Pierce Middle School in Redford.

May brings the wisdom and experience to the operation and Springfield offers youth.

"I'm older and have more of a hands on experience being a mother," May says. Springfield has an educational background with children and she's not that far from their clientele's age. She says she readily remembers some of the issues that youth are facing and the kids will likely be receptive to talk to her.

"I'm a firm believer that it takes a village to raise a child and we would like to extend our services as part of that village," May says. "We would like to be a provider that makes a difference in the community."

Plans are that A New Day Agency will become a hangout for kids where they take part in programs, watch television, work on computers, do their homework or just do nothing.

Springfield and May also plan to host parent forums and workshops to invite parents to learn about what's going on in the center and the assistance that's available.

The shell of the building is rough and the inside is bare. But, May and Springfield hope donations that will take care of their needs. Their wish list includes four desktop computers; office equipment, including a fax machines, a copier and printers; a projector and screen that will adapt to their laptops; a laminator; folding and office chairs; six or eight foot tables; desks; a podium; desk lamps; an extra large area rug; a digital camera and just about anything else an office might need.

Most of all they want to make the office inviting to the youth they will serve.

"We're trying not to be an intervention and they are forced to come here," May says. "We want them to want to come here."

For more information go to www.anewdayonline.org or call (734) 891-0649.

But as a community we need to understand that books on the reading list for a high school advanced placement English class and a club urging tolerance of gay students didn't make this thing happen.

Judy Shewach, LACASA's executive director, said that it is natural that there is ongoing concern about this report of sexual abuse.

"But we have to keep in mind that there are three minors and their families here," she said. "The long-term impact of what happened on them is beyond our imagination. It's major."

Maria Stuart is the managing editor of the Livingston County Daily Press & Argus. You can reach her at (517) 552-2856 or by sending e-mail to mstuart@gannett.com.



Events put spotlight on domestic violence

Sunday, September 30, 2007

The Grand Rapids Press

The Center for Women in Transition is hosting events to help mark Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October.

The center, Domestic Violence Prevention Enhancement and Leadership Through Alliances (DELTA) and Safe Haven Ministries of Grand Rapids are co-sponsoring Engaging the Heart: A Call to Action on Friday at Grand Valley State University's Kirkhof Center on the Allendale campus.

Learn about helping prevent domestic violence before it happens at a full-day event with a keynote address by Nancy Murphy.

To register or for details, contact Lesley Coghill, 494-1741, or Sarah TenBroek, 452-6664.

On Oct. 16, the Lakeshore Alliance Against Domestic and Sexual Violence is presenting the Together We Can Appreciation Dinner to honor law enforcement, social service agency workers and community volunteers for their efforts.

To reserve a space, contact the Center for Women in Transition: 494-1749 or aplaceforwomen.org.

On Oct. 18 is Celebrating the Sisterhood of Strength, an exhibition featuring artwork created by women who have survived domestic abuse.

The event is 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Center for Women in Transition, 411 Butternut Drive in Holland Township.

Send e-mail to the author: lakeshore@grpress.com

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Calendar tells stories of survival

By Kaniqua Daniel Smothers
Journal Register News Service

Renee Shorter was molested by her mother and abused by her father as a child. That trend of abuse followed Shorter, 44, into her young adult years, when she was thrown down a flight of stairs by an ex-boyfriend.

Instead of being mute about her unfortunate past, the Pontiac resident is sharing her story with the world, along with 17 other domestic abuse survivors, through a new calendar titled 2008 HAVEN Survivors.

HAVEN is a nonprofit organization in Pontiac that provides direct services to adult and child victims experiencing domestic violence. Shorter went through HAVEN's program and now describes herself as "a woman of purpose, power and prosperity" focused on helping other women heal.

"A lot of women aren't going to come out," she said. "They're ashamed. They don't want to be judged and they're scared to ask for help. But maybe if they can see me -- look at what I've been through and where I am now, then maybe they'll think if she came through it, then maybe I can, too."

All domestic abuse survivors featured in the calendar are from the metro Detroit area and range in ages from 19 to 72. A 44-year-old male named Greg, whose last name is not being released, is the only man in the calendar. Greg was sexually abused by a priest when he was 9 years old. A gay male, he later endured physical and mental abuse by his partner.

"The main thing we want to do with this calendar is bring awareness to the prevalence of violence in our community and dispel common myths about domestic violence," said Beth Morrison, CEO of HAVEN. "Abuse can happen to anyone. But our hope is people currently experiencing domestic violence will be inspired to seek help for themselves and realize that you can come out of these situations strong and confident."

Facts and statistics about domestic and sexual violence are listed in the calendar, which is funded by GM OnStar and Detroit Saturn Auto Dealers. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence reports about four out of 10 females seen in emergency rooms for injuries related to assault are there because of intimate partner violence. HAVEN reports that one out of three women are affected by domestic violence.

"I want to be the mouthpiece for domestic violence survivors," Shorter said. "I want to speak and let them know there is hope, love and healing for them."

To learn about domestic violence assistance, contact the statewide domestic violence hotline at (800) 897-LINK or call (800) 799-SAFE.

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Veto fight looming over children's health program

Associated Press - October 1, 2007 5:03 AM ET

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Bush is promising a veto but backers of a bill to expand a children's health program are continuing their efforts to get him to reconsider.

Supporters are planning a march to the White House this morning, with children pulling red wagons filled with petitions supporting the bill.

Bush had proposed a \$5-billion increase in the State Children's Health Insurance Program. But Congress has passed a \$35-billion boost to expand the program to about 10 million children.

The program provides health coverage for children whose families can't afford it but aren't poor enough to qualify for Medicaid. The Democrats' plan would be funded by new tobacco taxes.

It's drawn significant support from Republicans. But Bush calls the bill "irresponsible," saying it would dramatically expand the program beyond its original intent.

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THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Children's health in GOP's hands

Monday, October 01, 2007

Unless President Bush backs away from his threat to veto a significant expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program, it will be incumbent on all Republicans in the House who value health care over ideological warfare to summon the courage and vote to override him.

The Senate approved the legislation with enough votes to overcome a veto. It also passed the House with a hefty margin but fell 24 votes short of a veto-proof majority. Although it will be an uphill battle, it may still be possible to bring two dozen more House members to their senses.

Any Republicans courageous enough to defy the president on this issue will find themselves in good company. The measure, which would increase federal funding for the program by \$35 billion over the next five years, is the product of intense bipartisan negotiations that included prominent Republicans in the Senate, led by Charles Grassley of Iowa and Orrin Hatch of Utah. It has been endorsed by governors from both parties and by a wide array of organizations, including the American Medical Association and the chief lobbying groups for private insurance plans and for senior citizens.

The president objects to the size of the proposed funding increase, which is seven times what he had proposed. But the costs would be fully covered by an increase in tobacco taxes, which would bring health benefits of its own by discouraging smoking. He complains that the bill would encourage middle-class children to enroll in a program that was originally designed to cover low-income youngsters. The main effort and primary impact, however, will still be on low-income children.

Bush also warns that a substantial number of middle-class children will simply be switched from private insurance to the public program, shifting costs to the taxpayer. That will inevitably occur. But experts have calculated that the president's preferred approach - tax deductions for people who buy their own insurance - would provide a much higher proportion of its benefits to people who already have insurance, thus doing far less than the congressional measure to reduce the number of uninsured children.

Bush seems determined to use the children's program to take a stand against what he calls "an incremental step toward the goal of government-run health care for every American." He would rather sacrifice the health of uninsured children than yield an inch of ideological ground. House Republicans ought to take a more humane approach and override the president's blinkered obstinacy.

The New York Times

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At Issue: SCHIP; Don't cut the children off

By U.S. Rep. Bart Stupak

The U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation last week that would re-authorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). The legislation would provide health care coverage for more than 10 million children nationwide -- preserving coverage for the 6.6 million children currently covered by SCHIP and extending coverage to 3.8 million more uninsured children.

In Michigan, this means bringing another 80,000 uninsured children into the SCHIP program, providing them with needed health care services.

Since its creation in 1997, SCHIP has provided children access to quality health care. Last year, the SCHIP program covered 118,500 Michigan children who would otherwise not have health insurance. As the SCHIP program is set to expire on Sept. 30, it is imperative that Congress and the president swiftly re-authorize this program.

Unfortunately, President Bush and some Republicans in Congress are playing politics with the SCHIP program and with our children's health. In fact, the president has threatened to turn his back on millions of working families by vetoing this bill.

In criticizing this legislation, the president and his allies make a number of false charges. They claim that the legislation will benefit wealthy families, but that is not true. Currently, less than 1 in 10 children covered by SCHIP live in a family of four earning more than \$41,000 a year; this will remain the same under this bill. Republicans have also claimed that the bill expands coverage to adults, but that is also a distortion. In fact, this legislation phases out any state expansions of SCHIP that include adults other than pregnant women.

I am proud to note that the SCHIP legislation passed the House with bipartisan support, garnering 45 votes from my Republican colleagues. The legislation is also supported by 43 of the 50 governors -- Democrats and Republicans alike. A broad spectrum of non-profit groups and professional organizations, including the American Medical Association, America's Health Insurance Plans, Families USA, the American Nurses Association and the Catholic Health Association support this legislation. In short, on this basic issue of providing our children with health care, the president and his allies find themselves increasingly isolated.

Ironically, many in Congress who oppose SCHIP on the basis of cost enthusiastically support the president's trillion-dollar war. While the White House requests an additional \$190 billion -- just for this year -- to keep our troops in the middle of Iraq's civil war, the administration claims that it is too expensive to pay \$7 billion a year to provide health insurance for our nation's children, including as many as 200,000 children here in Michigan.

It is time to put America and our families first. The president should sign, not veto, this SCHIP bill. If he does veto it, Congress should vote to override the veto. Those who vote against SCHIP or to sustain the president's veto are equally responsible for denying health care coverage to 10 million children, including 200,000 children here in Michigan.

U.S. Rep Bart Stupak, D-Menominee, serves on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, the committees with jurisdiction over the SCHIP program. His district includes most of northern Lower Michigan and the entire Upper Peninsula.

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Photos

Don't cut off health plan for poor kids

September 30, 2007

I cannot believe, though it's true, that nearly half of Congress -- and the White House -- who all have free, excellent health care paid for by taxpayers for the rest of their lives, refuse even to continue the current, soon-to-expire health care program for low-income children.

This is one of those "all for the want of a horseshoe nail" scenarios for those who blindly, selfishly believe it will save money -- next week, yes; next year, no; the rest of our lives, major expense. We will be around longer than next week, so let's plan for the long-term.

Advertisement

Pinching pennies for child health care inside the wealthiest nation in the history of mankind is simply immoral and despicable. This kind of behavior makes me ashamed to be an American.

Children can't vote, so our elected "leaders" seem to think they should be more self-reliant, get a job and pay for their own health insurance.

Charles Gosh

Southfield

Look at Iraq spending

SCHIP has helped millions of children throughout the years with health insurance. Health insurance is one of the greatest causes of bankruptcies and foreclosures.

We should invest in providing health care to the innocent children who have no control over their situations. This investment should be made in light of the absurd amount of money being spent in Iraq.

Leor Barak

Royal Oak

The party of the dollar

I find it ironic that the Republican Party, which is so against freedom of choice, is so against helping children who are already here. Morality versus dollars, and their morals stop at the buck.

Laura Webb

DeWitt

This program works

As a health care professional, I see every day how this program works. Please don't let it die.

Joel Garrett

Detroit

A veto for poor children

While President George W. Bush enjoyed a rubber-stamp Congress, there was no need for him to exercise his veto power. Now with the opposition in control of both houses, Bush has threatened his veto 48 times this year, and he threatens another when he receives the bill authorizing funding for health care for uninsured poverty children.

Don't cut off health plan for poor kids

Isn't that a shame -- our president and his obstructionist and enabling Republican constituents in Congress care more for corporate interests and the wealthy than they do for low-income children. Please don't forget this action when you vote in November 2008.

Robert Thomson

Southfield

War before kids

President Bush said that any attempt to get the bipartisan children's health bill passed will be vetoed, claiming it is too expensive. An extra \$35 billion spread over five years is too much for him, but not spending that amount in about four months in Iraq. How anyone can still support Bush is beyond comprehension.

Jim Karavite

Royal Oak

Voters against children

Now we know which Michigan GOP congressional representatives are only too happy to prop up their failed president at the expense of the health of America's children. Shame on Dave Camp, Peter Hoekstra, Joe Knollenberg, Thad McCotter, Mike Rogers and Tim Walberg. Their perverted view of "family values" is all too apparent.

Vern Ehlers, Fred Upton and my representative, Candice Miller, are to be commended. The fog of "party over country" seems to have lifted from their eyes.

Richard S. Cohen

Clay

Don't let children lose

American children are facing a crisis in this country. Millions will be left unprotected with no one to turn toward for help. What is this crisis? No, it's not another episode of "Kid Nation"; it's the lapse of SCHIP health care coverage.

This is not an expansion of welfare. This will affect not only low-income, but also middle-income families. The American way of life is under attack, and this is just another battle in this war. Keep our children out of this war. If our children lose, we all lose.

Dr. Chantale E. Bothuell

Detroit

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Monday, October 01, 2007

Cigarette taxes proposed for health plan

Democrats' proposal increases per-pack tax from 39 cents to \$1; affects the poor most.

Charles Babington / Associated Press

At a glance

Smoking : The \$35 billion increase in children's health coverage passed by Congress last week would be financed with a 156 percent increase in the federal cigarette tax.

Demographic: Low-income people smoke more heavily than do wealthier people, making cigarette taxes regressive.

Cutting back : But some of the insurance plan's champions say higher cigarette taxes discourage smoking.

WASHINGTON -- Congressional Democrats have chosen an unlikely source to pay for the bulk of their proposed \$35 billion increase in children's health coverage: people with relatively little money and education.

The program expansion passed by the House and Senate last week would be financed with a 156 percent increase in the federal cigarette tax, taking it to \$1 per pack from the current 39 cents. Low-income people smoke more heavily than do wealthier people in the United States, making cigarette taxes a regressive form of revenue.

Democrats, who wrote the legislation and provided most of its votes, generally portray themselves as champions of the poor. They do not dispute that the tax plan would hit poor communities disproportionately, but they say it is worth it to provide health insurance to millions of modest-income children.

All the better, they say, if higher cigarette taxes discourage smoking.

"I'm very happy that we're paying for this," Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., noting that the plan would not add to the deficit. "The health of the children is extremely important," he said. "In the long run, maybe it'll stop people from smoking."

Congress probably will revisit the cigarette tax issue soon because President Bush has pledged to veto the proposed \$35 billion expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program. The decade-old program helps families buy medical coverage if their income is too high to qualify for Medicaid.

Bush has proposed a more modest growth for the program, and both political parties seem inclined to pay for it through a tax on an unpopular group, cigarette smokers.

By most measures, the average smoker is less privileged than the average nonsmoker. Nearly one-third of all U.S. adults living in poverty are smokers, compared with 23.5 percent of those above the poverty level, statistics show.



Church to provide food at a discount

HOMETOWN HEADLINES

LAPEER CITY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Monday, October 01, 2007

By Holly Klaft

Journal Staff Writer

LAPEER - Residents in need of a meal can place orders for fresh and nonperishable food items from 1-8 p.m. Oct. 11 at Faith Christian Family Church, 3440 Davison Road, Lapeer.

Orders also will be taken from 1-5 p.m. Oct. 12 and 15 at the church. Fresh meat, fruits, vegetables and nonperishable food items worth about \$65 will be available for \$25.

Orders and payments that are mailed must be received by Oct. 11.

There are no income limits or limits on the amount of food that can be bought.

The food can be picked up from 9:30-11:30 a.m. Oct. 27.

Details: www.lapeerfamilychurch.com or (810) 667-5077.

- Holly Klaft

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Food Bank to benefit from car cruise

HOMETOWN HEADLINES

MUNDY TOWNSHIP

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Saturday, September 29, 2007

By George Jaksa

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MUNDY TWP. - Food Bank of Eastern Michigan will benefit from a car cruise Oct. 4 at Burger King, 5510 Fenton Road.

The 5-8 p.m. event, sponsored by Christian Cruisers, will have a Halloween theme, said member Steve Casner of Flint Township.

He said 120-140 cars are expected at the cruise, where money will be raised through a silent auction, 50-50 fundraiser and a percentage of sales at the Burger King made during cruise hours. Prizes will be given away, including for costumes and the best-decorated cars.

- George Jaksa

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Flory family not giving stamp of approval to idea

Sunday, September 30, 2007

Editor's note: During October, Brad Flory will feed his family on a food-stamp budget. He'll be writing about his experiences occasionally in his column and blog (<http://blog.mlive.com/bradosphere>). He'll also recap the experience in a story after the end of the month.

Eating on a food-stamp budget is more complicated than it sounds.

The first question, naturally, is: How much can I buy?

It's a big question because Monday I will start feeding my family on a food-stamp budget for a month.

Judging by the excitement level around the Flory home, it could be a long 31 days.

Food-stamp benefits vary based on household income and expenses.

The national average is about \$3 per person per day. Michigan's maximum benefit is \$5. For my family of four over a whole month, that range is \$372 to \$620. It's a huge difference for setting a budget.

More confused than usual, I turned to the Michigan Food Stamp Partnership's online benefit calculator (<http://calculator.foodstamphelp.org>).

Pretending we lost our jobs and moved in with my mother, I told the calculator our family has no income and no household expenses.

It gave us \$518 a month. That's good enough for me. Everything we eat in October must be purchased on that budget.

Smaller questions followed.

Is it fair both my kids eat lunch at school? Yes, because if we had no income the school would feed them for free.

What about food pantries and charities? It would be morally wrong to take food other people really need, so they are off limits.

Are we cheating because my 17-year-old daughter often eats dinner with her boyfriend at his house? No. People on food stamps must have 17-year-olds who disappear around dinner time.

What about food already in our kitchen? We can eat anything that will spoil but must pretend to buy it and deduct the cost from our \$518 budget.

Obviously, I have several advantages over people who really survive on food stamps.

I don't have to fill out forms and stand in line in government offices, for which I am grateful. I have a reliable car and gas money, so I can drive around to snag the best food bargains. Except for meals, I will continue to enjoy the luxuries of a middle-class lifestyle.

I am not setting out to make any statement about poor people.

I am not holding them up as the noble downtrodden, and I am not putting them down as lazy wards of the welfare state.

Poor people are like any other group. You cannot paint them all the same.

The only reason for this experiment is to test my big-mouth claim that American children should not go hungry because their parents can get food stamps.

Let's see if I know what I am talking about.

Bring on the macaroni and canned corn.

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Keeping the heat on this season

By KURT HAUGLIE, DMG Writer

HOUGHTON — The weather is getting cooler, and many people are thinking about the upcoming heating season. Even people who are financially secure are probably worried about the expected rise in natural gas and electricity prices this winter, but for those on fixed or low incomes, the worry must be much more severe.

To help low-income people pay their winter heating bills, the federal government created the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program in 1981, or LIHEAP. However, Maureen Sorbet, spokeswoman for the Michigan Department of Human Services, which distributes LIHEAP funds, said use of the service is increasing.

"It's going up everywhere in the state," she said.

Sorbet said in Baraga, Houghton, Keweenaw and Ontonagon counties, the number of people getting LIHEAP increased between 2005 and 2006.

Although President Bush released \$50 million for the program in August, Rep. Bart Stupak, D-Menominee, and other members of Congress are asking the president to release another \$151.5 million they approved for the program, which is now in a contingency fund.

According to a letter written to the president by Stupak and other legislators, \$131 million of that fund must be released by Sept. 30 or it will expire.

In that letter to the president, the members wrote: "Low-income Americans experience a much higher energy burden than the average American household. No family in our nation should be forced to choose between paying an energy bill and putting food on the table for themselves and their children."

Sorbet said in order for residents to apply for LIHEAP help, they have to follow a specific procedure.

"They have to have a shutoff notice or the inability to have deliverable fuel," she said. "They have to pay a certain amount of their income (for heat)."

Income and household size are required, also, among others, Sorbet said.

There are caps on the amount of money available to individual households, Sorbet said.

"It varies year to year, depending on the amount of funds we have available," she said.

The DHS hasn't taken applications for LIHEAP since August, and whether more applications will be taken will depend on what happens with the situation regarding the 2008 state budget, which hasn't been passed yet.

"We've exhausted all the funding for this year," she said. "As of Oct. 1, more funding will be available providing the government doesn't shut down."

Sorbet said there are steps people should take now which could help prevent a shutoff or difficulties with utility companies this winter.

"They should work with their heating assistance provider to get some payment plan to keep their heat on," she said.

Local Community Action Agencies can provide assistance with house and apartment weatherization, also.



Muskegon Chronicle

Officials: Merger won't affect Catholic Social Services' course

Sunday, September 30, 2007

By Susan Harrison Wolffis

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For 60 years, they've tended the wounds of the community, first under the name of the Catholic Service Bureau, then in recent years as Catholic Social Services.

They've fed the poor, counseled those struggling with some of life's toughest issues, provided adoption services.

But 2007 brings changes to the agency.

In November, Catholic Social Services will merge with Catholic Charities of West Michigan -- Grand Rapids to become the Catholic Charities of West Michigan -- Lakeshore.

Executive Director Bob Mills said there "should be no impact" on services in the six counties already served by the local agency. Offices in Muskegon, Baldwin, Holland, Hart, Ludington and White Cloud will also remain.

Catholic Social Services offers 34 programs ranging from abstinence education to adoption, criminal sexual conduct and domestic violence group counseling to prenatal care and foster grandparent programs.

"What everyone's learned through the years is that local relationships are critical," Mills said. "Our job is to look at the community's needs ... and meet them."

That is the same charge answered by a group of nuns in Muskegon 60 years ago when they partnered with the people of the area's Catholic parishes to feed the hungry and come to the aid of the poor.

Mills calls the agency the "social justice arm" of the church.

"It's part of our teachings," he said. "We go to church on Sunday ... and hear a message. Our job is to make that (message) come alive."

Former staff member Maryjane Zadonek of Muskegon, who now volunteers for the agency and has served on its board, calls its mission "to care for God's people."

In the beginning, the agency operated on donations from the church and its people. But as Catholic Social Services has expanded its programs, Mills said, it had to look outside the church for financial support.

This year's \$8.8 million budget is a "patchwork" of governmental contracts, church donations and United Way and foundation grants. Sixty-three percent of the budget is "government contracts" from the Department of Human Services and Community Mental Health to provide foster care and adoption services, as well as other programs.

The collaboration between private and public agencies is "only practical," Mills said.

"There is not one answer ... not one agency can do it all," Mills said.

The rest of the budget is supported by the Catholic churches in the area, private donations, Community Foundation for Muskegon County and United Way of the Lakeshore.

Because of its history of mission work, Catholic Social Services -- soon to be Catholic Charities -- is "dedicated to the preferential treatment of the poor," Mills said.

Eighty-five percent of the agency's clients are living under the poverty level or are considered "the working poor," he said.

In the community, Catholic Social Services is probably best known for its foster care and adoption work. But its programs offer "a continuum of care," Mills said, starting with prenatal services to assistance to the elderly.

This year, the local agency added several existing programs into its fold, including Catholics Acting On Social Teaching (C.A.S.T.), which is described as the "social justice" outreach of the eight Catholic parishes in Muskegon. Also added in were the Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry, Baby Pantry and Foster Grandparents program.

In 2002, Catholic Social Services purchased the Midtown Building, which it had been renting in downtown Muskegon since 1984, and moved its offices and various pantries under one roof.

"That was one of our real successes," Mills said.

One of the hardest times was when accountant Daniel Korson was accused of embezzling more than \$2.25 million over five years while working for Muskegon Family Care, Catholic Social Services, the Catholic schools and St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church. Catholic Social Services was "hit the least," losing \$170,000 from their building fund.

"We were all victims," Mills said. "But no programs were ever affected."

Korson was sentenced to five years in prison in 2006.

Earlier this year, the Diocese of Grand Rapids reimbursed Catholic Social Services for the money that was taken. Mills called it "an unexpected blessing."

Even during the most trying times, when they thought they'd never recoup the \$170,000, Mills said the original mission of Catholic Social Services continued.

"We want to meet the people where they are now," he said. "Wherever that is, whatever that is, we'll be there."

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